GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:173
ANSWERED ON:11.03.2008
DOHA ROUND OF TALKS UNDER WTO
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Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the fresh WTO proposals on agriculture in the Doha Round meet India's demands;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Union Government has studied the fresh proposals thoroughly; and

(d) if so, the extent to which the fresh WTO proposals would protect the poor farmers of the country?

Answer

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH)

a) to d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.173 FOR ANSWER ON 11TH MARCH, 2008 REGARDING "DOHA ROUND OF TALKS UNDER WTO"

(a) to (d) Multilateral negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) under the Doha Round have been under way since 2001. These negotiations cover Agriculture, Non-Agricultural Market Access, Services and a slew of other issues.

The WTO has set up a Negotiating Group on Agriculture. Based on the discussions in this Group, the Chair of the Group brought out a draft modalities text in July 2007, containing proposals on the three pillars of the Agriculture Negotiations, namely, domestic support, market access and export competition. This text can be accessed on the WTO website (www.wto.org). The proposals in this text formed the basis of extensive negotiations in Geneva from September 2007 to January 2008. Subsequently, the Chair brought out a revised draft modalities text on 8 February 2008 that reflects the outcome of deliberations in the Negotiating Group on the earlier draft. The revised text can also be accessed on the WTO website. Multilateral discussions on the revised text commenced in Geneva in February 2008.

While the revised draft reflects progress in some areas, it also contains new proposals on some issues, which would require detailed deliberations e.g. Special Products (SPs), Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), the Special Agricultural Safeguard, Tropical Products, Tariff Simplification etc. There are also some other issues on which large divergences still exist, e.g. reductions in overall trade-distorting domestic support (OTDS), market access in Sensitive Products, Tariff Capping etc.

India has carefully studied the revised proposals and we have articulated our responses to these proposals in the Negotiating Group. We are assiduously pursuing the negotiations with a view to safeguarding our key concerns.

India has been working closely with her coalition partners in developing country groupings in order to achieve an outcome that would fully reflect the level of ambition of the Doha mandate and the interests of developing countries. A substantial and effective reduction in domestic support and tariffs in agriculture by developed countries while enabling developing countries to protect and promote the interests of their low income and resource poor farmers is a priority for India in the negotiations.